

Meeting: Standards Committee

Date: 9 March 2006

TERMS OF REFERENCE REVIEW

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1 PURPOSE

The purpose is to receive a report on a Standards Committee review against its terms of reference.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

To note the report.

3 BACKGROUND

At its meeting on 31 May 2005 the Standards Committee requested the independent members to undertake a review of the Council's performance relating to the Committee's terms of reference. This review was to be undertaken in consultation with the Borough Solicitor.

The conclusions of this review are in the appendix to this report and are updated as follows:

Activity

- (1.1) The revisions to the format of the Register of Members' Interests are to be introduced following the Local Government elections in May 2006;
- (1.3) on 24 January 2006 the Committee considered a report on the Government's proposals for revising the Code of Conduct. The Borough Solicitor has passed the Committee's further comments on the Government's review to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister;
- (1.5) the Borough Solicitor will undertake an all members seminar on the Code of Conduct following the Local Government elections in May 2006.

4 IMPLICATIONS

None.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None

APPENDIX

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL STANDARDS COMMITTEE REVIEW AGAINST THE TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR YEAR 2004/5

	Activity	Activity in 2004/5	Assessment	Activity Planned for or Carried Out in 2005/6
1.1	To promote and maintain high standards of conduct by councillors and co-opted members;	Training session noted in 5.5, guidance to members in 5.2 below.	Satisfactory.	Requirement for Members to sign-off the RoMI will be formalised – 5.14
1.2	To assist councillors and co-opted members to observe the Members' Code of Conduct;	Guidance to members in Filofax format was circulated to members at end 2004. Training session noted in 5.5. The Monitoring Officer has provided advice & guidance to members on an "as required" basis.	Satisfactory	A further presentation to members took place in June 2005 and will be continued on an annual basis. The Monitoring Officer will continue to be available to provide advice & support
1.3	To advise the Council on the adoption or revision of the Members' Code of Conduct;	None	Satisfactory	A submission to the Standards Board of responses to their proposed changes to The Code was made in June 2005.
1.4.	To monitor the operation of the Members' Code of Conduct	As per 5.14, the Registers of Members Interests & of Gifts & Entertainment were reviewed	Satisfactory. No complaints have been made against Members since the adoption of the Code in 2002 and the end of the Council year in March 2005 and the monitoring officer and elected committee members are not aware of any ethical issues of substance.	No specific activities. The Leader has been made aware of the Committee's concerns and the situation will be monitored.

	Activity	Activity in 2004/5	Assessment	Activity Planned for or Carried Out in 2005/6
			The independent members have noted that some members' support for the ethical standards regime is less than whole hearted.	
1.5	To advise, train or arrange to train councillors and co-opted members on matters relating to the Members' Code of Conduct;	Refresher training session by the Monitoring Officer in June 2004	Fit-for-purpose	Refresher training session presented by the Monitoring Officer in June 2005 & will be repeated on an annual basis.
1.6	Responsibility for granting dispensations to councillors and co-opted members from requirements relating to interests set out in the Members' Code of Conduct;	Reactive. No requests in period		Reactive
1.7	To deal with any reports from a case tribunal or interim case tribunal, and any report from the monitoring officer on any matter that is referred by an ethical standards officer to the monitoring officer;	Reactive. No reports received in period	Satisfactory	Reactive
1.8	To deal with any matters referred from the Full Council or any other body;	The Committee has included in its response to the SB noted in 5.3, the Council's strongly held views that public service interest which are non-prejudicial should not require to be declared or at the least declared in the form of a list.	Satisfactory	The Committee has included in its response to the SB noted in 5.3, the Council's strongly held views that public service interest which are non-prejudicial should not require to be declared or at the least declared in the form of a list.

